

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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USIA-06 ACDA-05 SAJ-01 SAM-01 NIC-01 CU-02 OMB-01

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R 271350Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7178

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECSTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 2771

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, IN

SUBJECT: SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

REF: STATE 042205

SUMMARY: THE GOI HAD RESPONDED COOLLY TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S
DIPLOMACY OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS. THE GOVERNMENT DOES
NOT APPEAR TO WANT TO BE PLACED IN THE POSITION OF CHASING
AFTER EPHEMERAL EXPRESSION OF CHINESE GOOD WILL WHEN THE
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CHINESE DECLINE TO CONVEY THESE THROUGH "NORMAL" CHANNELS

AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE HEARD FROM A ROMANIAN CONTACT THAT MRS. GANDHI IS WARMING UP TO THE IDEA OF A TRIP TO PEKING, BUT CLEARLY MUCH WILL HAVE TO CHANGE BEFORE THAT COULD BECOME A REALITY. IT'S TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THE INDIANS WILL CONTINUE TO STAND PAT NOW THAT VICE PREMIER CHEN HAS SPOKEN OUT SO POSITIVELY ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR RELATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. DURING A STOPOVER IN CALCUTTA FEBRUARY 22 EN ROUTE TO KING BIRENDRA'S CORONATION, CHINESE VICE PREMIER CHEN HSI-LIEN CONTINUED TO PUT A FAVORABLE GLOSS ON THE PROSPECTS FOR SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS. RESPONDING TO A JOURNALIST'S QUESTION AT THE CALCUTTA AIRPORT, CHEN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT "ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN TWISTS AND TURNS IN OUR RELATIONS THESE WILL CHANGE. THESE WILL NOT REMAIN FOR LONG. FINALLY INDIA AND CHINA WILL LIVE IN FRIENDLY RELATIONS." IN LINE WITH WHAT OTHER PRC SPOKESMEN HAVE SAID HERE IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, CHEN ALSO CALLED ATTENTION TO THE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND INDIAN PEOPLE AND THANKED THE INDIAN PEOPLE FOR THEIR WARM RECEPTION OF THE CHINESE TABLE TENNIS TEAM. CHEN WAS GREETED IN CALCUTTA BY THE WEST BENGAL AGRICULTURE MINISTER BUT APPARENTLY NOT BY ANY OFFICIALS FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN DELHI.

2. ACCORDING TO AN INDIAN WIRE SERVICE REPORT, CHEN EXPANDED ON THESE REMARKS DURING A SECOND STOPOVER IN CALCUTTA ON HIS FEBRUARY 26 RETURN FLIGHT TO CHINA. AFTER DECLARING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT "IS READY FOR TALKS" FOR NORMALIZING RELATIONS SHOULD THE GOI DESIRE, CHEN RESPONDED TO NEWSMEN'S QUESTIONS IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

QUOTE: ASKED ABOUT RESTORATION OF NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THE VICE-PREMIER SAID: "IT IS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO CONSIDER EASING THE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS." ASKED WHETHER CHINA THOUGHT THAT INDIA'S CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION STOOD IN THE WAY OF IMPROVING SINO-INDIA TIES, HE REPLIED "NOT NECESSARILY." ASKED WHETHER CHINA WAS READY FOR TALKS IF INDIA WANTED IT FOR NORMALISATION OF RELATIONS, MR. CHEN REPLIED: "YES, WE ARE READY FOR TALKS." WHEN A CORRESPONDENT

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POINTED OUT THAT MRS. INDIRA GANDHI HAD WRITTEN THE CHAIRMAN MAO BUT NO REPLY HAD BEEN RECEIVED, HE SAID: "ONE DAY INDIA AND CHINA WILL HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS." UNQUOTE. SO FAR AS WE KNOW NO CENTRAL GOI OFFICIALS WERE ON HAND IN CALCUTTA TO GREET CHEN THIS TIME EITHER.

3. WHILE VICE PREMIER CHEN WAS GIVING A FRESH BOOST TO SPECULATION ABOUT POSSIBLE EARLY IMPROVEMENTS IN SINO-

INDIAN RELATIONS, THE PRC TABLE TENNIS TEAM QUIETLY WOUND UP ITS LAST FULL DAY IN DELHI FEBRUARY 26 BEFORE RETURNING HOME. AFTER LEAVING CALCUTTA, THE TEAM (LESS SOME MEMBERS WHO DEPARTED DIRECTLY FROM CALCUTTA) PLAYED SOME EXHIBITION MATCHES IN DELHI, SPENT FIVE DAYS TOURING AGRA (TAJ MAHAL) AND JAIPUR, AND WAS FETED AT A SPORTS FEDERATION RECEPTION HERE FEBRUARY 26. THOUGH THE TEAM WAS CORRECTLY TREATED BY THE GOI, NO ARRANGEMENTS FOR A CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER WERE MADE AND MEA OFFICIALS KEPT ALOOF FROM ITS ACTIVITIES ALTHOUGH THEY MET THE TEAM ON ITS ARRIVAL IN DELHI AND SAW IT OFF. MEA DID NOT HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE AT THE CHINESE EMBASSY CHARGE'S RECEPTION FEBRUARY 20 OR AT THE FEBRUARY 26 RECEPTION. NO APPOINTMENT WITH MRS. GANDHI WAS MADE, AND MEA OFFICIAL TOLD US FEBRUARY 26, BECAUSE THE CHINESE NEVER FORMALLY REQUESTED THAT SUCH A CALL BE SET UP. WHEN WE OBSERVED THAT THE NORTH KOREAN TABLE TENNIS TEAM WAS RECEIVED BY MRS. GANDHI FEBRUARY 19, THE OFFICIAL EXPLAINED THAT THE NORTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR HAD WAITED "FOR HOURS" IN MRS. GANDHI'S SECRETARIAT IN ORDER TO PIN DOWN AN APPOINTMENT (THIS IS NOT SO FARFETCHED IN VIEW OF THE ONGOING KEEN RIVALRY BETWEEN THE DPRK AND THE ROK EMBASSIES HERE FOR PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE). THE GOI EVIDENTLY DID NOT CONSIDER A FEBRUARY 9 STATEMENT BY THE CHINESE TEAM'S SPOKESMAN THAT HE WAS READY TO MEET MRS. GANDHI "IF I AM INVITED" AS AN ADEQUATE INDICATION OF INTEREST IN A MEETING. THE GOI REQUIRED A FORMAL REQUEST, THE CHINESE

WERE APPARENTLY UNWILLING TO MAKE SUCH A REQUEST, SO NO MEETING TOOK PLACE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 2771

4. AT LEAST UP TO FEBRUARY 26 INDIAN GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN CONTINUED TO CHOOSE THEIR WORDS CAREFULLY AND HAVE INSISTED THAT VERY LITTLE IF ANYTHING HAS CHANGED DESPITE THE PRC'S EXERCISE IN PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CHAVAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY FEBRUARY 21 TO A PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION WHETHER THERE WAS ANY MORE TO START A DIALOGUE, DECLARED THAT INDIA HAD REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED A SINCERE DESIRE FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BUT "A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA IS STILL AWAITED." IN A CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 26 WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, A MID-LEVEL MEA OFFICIAL DISCUSSED THE CHEN AND CHAVAN STATEMENTS AS WELL AS THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE CALCUTTA-
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RELATED EVENTS ON GOI THINKING. (HOWEVER NEITHER THE MEA OFFICIAL NOR THE EMBASSY OFFICER WERE AWARE AT THE TIME OF CHEN'S RETURN FLIGHT REMARKS IN CALCUTTA.). THE MEA OFFICIAL SAID HE FOUND CHEN'S FEBRUARY 22 STATEMENT "POSITIVE" AND WORTHY OF FURTHER STUDY BUT NOTED THAT THE CHINESE CONTINUE TO SPEAK "INSUBSTANTIVELY" (SIC) OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES WHILE DELIBERATELY AVOIDING REFERENCES TO THE INDIAN "GOVERNMENT" OF INDIA "THE COUNTRY". FURTHERMORE, CHEN'S STATEMENT HAD TO BE PLACED IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE PRC'S LONGSTANDING UNRESPONSIVENESS TO CONCRETE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOI. ASKED WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE THE GOI WAS WAITING FOR, THE MEA OFFICIAL CONFINED HIMSELF TO REPEATING THAT THE GOI HAD TAKEN A NUMBER OF "CONCRETE MEASURES" TO WHICH THERE HAD BEEN NO REPLY; AMONG THEM, HE NOTED, WAS THE EASING OF VISA RESTRICTIONS (PRESUMABLY THE GRANT OF TRANSIT VISAS TO PRC BOUND PASSENGERS). MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE PRC HAD NOT MADE ANY OFFICIAL STATEMENTS TO THE GOI INDICATING AN INTEREST IN TALKING SERIOUSLY; PEKING HAD NOT EVEN REPLIED, HE CONTINUED, TO SEVERAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

5. ASSESSING THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE PRC'S RECENT ACTIVITIES
HERE, THE MEA OFFICIAL CONTINUED THAT AT MOST RELATIONS COULD
BE SAID TO HAVE "INCHED AHEAD" AS A RESULT OF THESE EVENTS.
APART FROM CHEN'S STATEMENTS IN CALCUTTA, NOT MUCH POSITIVE
HAD REALLY HAPPENED. THE OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE
VARIOUS CHINESE REMARKS MADE IN INDIA DURING THE COURSE
OF THE TOURNAMENT AND AFTERWARDS WERE CALCULATED AND CLEARED
AT A HIGH LEVEL, BUT SAID HE SAW LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE IN THEM,
EXCEPT PERHAPS IN CHEN'S FEBRUARY 22 STATEMENT WHICH HE RE-
ITERATED WOULD RECEIVE FURTHER STUDY.

6. THE FEELING THAT A HARDER, MORE SKEPTICAL LOOK SHOULD BE
TAKEN AT CHINA'S PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY HAS ALSO
SURFACED IN THE INDIAN PRESS. THE HINDU CORRESPONDENT
G. K. REDDY, PROBABLY REFLECTING THE THINKING IN SOME HIGH
GOI CIRCLES, COMMENTED THAT THE CHINESE ARE "USING PING-
PONG AS A WEDGE FOR ESTABLISHING SOME SORT OF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE
RELATIONSHIP AT A SPORTING LEVEL... TO CREATE STEP BY STEP A
CLIMATE OF OPINION FOR EXERTING PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON
THE GOVERNMENT TO SHED ITS FEARS AND SUSPICIONS.." REDDY
SAID THAT THE GOI "DOES NOT WANT TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE KIND
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OF SHADOW PLAY WITH PING-PONG AND ACUPUNCTURE SERVING AS A
CONVENIENT COVER FOR POLITICAL MOVES WHICH ARE BETTER
CONDUCTED THROUGH NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS..." SEVERAL
INDIAN JOURNALISTS HAVE MORE RECENTLY NOTED THAT THE PRC HAS
NOT SENT A MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DELEGATION TO THE ESCAP MEETING
NOW TAKING PLACE HERE, BUT PLACED THE PRC CHARGE HERE AT THE
HEAD OF ITS DELEGATION. THE RANKING OFFICIAL FROM PEKING IS
AN OFFICIAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE MFA. (CHINESE DIPLOMATS HAVE TOLD SOME NEWSMEN HERE IN
PARTIAL EXPLANATION THAT THE PRC DELEGATION TO THE LAST SUCH
MEETING IN COLOMBO WAS SIMILARLY HEADED BY THE LOCAL CHIEF OF
MISSION)).

7. WITH THE HOI POLLOI OF MEA VERY GARDED, THE JOINT SECRETARY
FOR EAST ASIA SEMI-INVALIDED AND UNAVAILABLE WITH HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE, AND SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS FOCUSED ON ARMS
SUPPLY POLICY, WE HAVE FALLEN BACK ON ASKING OUR DIPLOMATIC
COLLEAGUES WHAT THEY KNOW OF INDIAN POLICY TOWARD CHINA. THERE
SEEMS TO BE GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THE PING-PONG APPROACH
LEAVES THE GOI COLD BUT THAT VICE PREMIER CHEN'S REMARKS MAY
WARM THE ATMOSPHERE SOMEWHAT. THE ROMANIAN COUNSELOR (DCM)
TELLS US HE HAS HEARD FROM A "A RELIABLE SOURCE" THAT MRS.
GANDHI WOULD IN FACT LIKE VERY MUCH TO SEE SINO-INDIAN RE-
LATIONS IMPROVE AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT AN INVITATION
TO PEKING. HE PLACES THIS IN THE POLICY CONTEXT OF INDIA'S
DESIRE TO INSERT ITSELF MORE CENTRALLY BETWEEN THE USSR,
US AND CHINA--A CONSIDERATION THE ROMANIANS AND YUGOSLAVS

BOTH AGREE IS IMPORTANT TO INDIA AND WHICH WILL PROBABLY WEIGHT IN INDIA'S TRYING TO GET INDO-US RELATIONS BACK ON THE TRACK AS SOON AS THIS CAN DISCREETLY BE DONE POLITICALLY.

8. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S SUMMARY ANALYSIS (REFTEL) THAT THE INDIANS HAVE BEEN COOL DURING THE LAST FEW WEEKS OF CHINESE PEOPLE'S DIPLOMACY. WE SUSPECT THE GOI HAS DECIDED THAT IT IS BEST NOT TO REPLY TO APPEALS MADE TO THE INDIAN PEOPLE RATHER THAN THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT. IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO WANT TO

BE PLACED IN THE POSITION OF CHASING AFTER EPHEMERAL EXPRESSIONS OF CHINESE GOOD-WILL WHEN THE CHINESE ARE NOT SIMULTANEOUSLY CONVEYING THESE SAME COMMENTS THROUGH "NORMAL" (I.E., PRIVATE, CONFIDENTIAL

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DIPLOMATIC) CHANNELS. THE INDIANS APPEAR TO BELIEVE THEY WERE MISLED BY PREVIOUS SUCH CHINESE WILL-O'-THE-WISPS (MAO'S HANDSHAKING EPISODE TWO YEARS AGO WITH THE INDIAN CHARGE IN PEKING) INTO MAKING A SERIES OF OVERTURES AND GESTURES IN LATE 1973 AND EARLY 1974 AND ARE DETERMINED TO BE MORE CAUTIOUS THIS TIME. CUMULATIVELY, HOWEVER, THE CHINESE COMMENTS IN INDIA, THE COMMENTS OF CHINESE NEWMEN IN HONG KONG, AND WE ASSUME SOME SIMILAR THINGS WHICH MAY BE GOING ON IN PEKING MAY BEGIN TO EASE INDIAN RIGIDITY. WHETHER THE INDIANS WILL CONTINUE TO STAND PAT (AS THEY DID ON THE CHINESE HINT BUT NOT REQUEST THEY WANTED TO SEE MRS. GANDHI) UNTIL THE CHINESE SAY OUT STRAIGHT WHAT THEY WANT AND ASK THE INDIANS NICELY FOR DISCUSSION, WE'RE NOT PREPARED TO FORECAST. BOTH CAN BE PRETTY STUBBORN.

9. WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF THE ROMANIAN STORY, EXCEPT THAT THE ROMANIANS HAVE FAIRLY GOOD CONTACTS WITH THE CHINESE HERE AND SOME PRETTY GOOD "INS" WITH INDIANS AS WELL. THINGS WILL HAVE TO MOVE QUITE A BIT, HOWEVER, BEFORE WE WOULD ANTICIPATE A TRIP BY MRS. GANDHI TO PEKING, EVEN THOUGH THE CHARACTERIZATION OF GENERAL STRATEGY THE ROMANIANS ATTRIBUTE TO INDIA FOR DEALING WITH THE MAJOR POWERS IS CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH ONE WE WOULD OURSELVES SUBSCRIBE TO.

10 WE HAVE NOT NOTED ANY NCNA REPORTING ON KASHMIR, ARMS SALES TO THE SUBCONTINENT, OR GRECHKO'S VISIT. OUR SOURCES ARE SOMEWHAT OUT OF DATE (THROUGH FEBRUARY 19) AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE CONFIRMATION IF THIS CONTINUES TO BE THE CASE. CHINESE SILENCE ON THESE SENSITIVE ISSUES WILL BE NOTED BY THE INDIANS AND MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ITEMS FAVORING A RELAXATION OF THE STRAIGHT-BACKED INDIAN POSTURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE INDIANS MAY ALSO WONDER WHETHER THERE IS SOME SINO-US COLLABORATION ON THE TIMING OF THE US ARMS POLICY CHANGE AND THE CHINESE AFFECTATION OF AFFECTION.

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